

NOAA's Oil Spill Response

Ensuring the Safety of Your Seafood

Crude oil has the potential to taint seafood with flavors and odors imparted by exposure to hydrocarbon chemicals. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration regulates the presence of hydrocarbons as a possible adulterant in seafood.

The public should *not* be concerned about the safety of seafood they are buying at this time. The spill has not reached the coastal area and the seafood on the market has not been affected. The Federal and State governments have strong systems in place to test and monitor seafood safety and to prohibit harvesting from affected areas, keeping oiled products out of the market.

NOAA Fisheries is working closely with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the States to ensure seafood safety. If managers determine that seafood may be affected, the next step is to assess whether seafood is tainted or contaminated to levels that could pose a risk to human health through consumption. NOAA conducts a combination of both sensory analysis (of tissue) and chemical analysis (of water, sediment, and tissue) to determine if seafood is safe following an oil spill. The results will be made public as soon as possible.

Seafood Inspection Program

The NOAA Seafood Inspection Program has often been called upon to perform screening and training tasks

following major oil spills such as the 1989 *Exxon Valdez* spill in Alaska; 1996 spill in Rhode Island; 1999 spill in Coos Bay, Oregon; and several spills in San Francisco including the most recent in 2007. Program experts perform sensory analysis to detect oil contamination. The results are compared with the results of chemical analysis conducted by NOAA's National Seafood Inspection Laboratory in Mississippi or its Science Centers.

In response to the current oil spill, the program is beginning to implement a plan of operation to assist both industry and government to determine the extent of contamination in seafood. The program can mobilize staff to train State inspection personnel and industry on sensory analysis techniques to expand the detection capabilities. Depending upon the scope of the problem, it is often best to train a base of State or local industry personnel in the affected area rather than continue to have Federal inspectors perform the routine analysis.

The mission of the NOAA Seafood Inspection

Program is to ensure the safety and quality as well as enhance the marketability and sustainability of seafood products for the benefit of the American consumer by providing science based inspection services to the seafood industry.

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The program is voluntary and fee-for-service to provide professional inspection services to ensure compliance with food safety and quality regulations. It is the only federal program with authority to bestow the U.S. “Grade A” mark for

eligible products that meet exceptional quality standards.

Inspection Offices

The NOAA Seafood Inspection Program can assist with all seafood inspection needs. Contact one of our regional offices about services in your area.

Headquarters

Silver Spring, MD
800-422-2750

Northeast Inspection Branch

Gloucester, MA
978-281-9303

Western Inspection Branch

Seattle, WA
206-526-4259

Southeast Inspection Branch

St. Petersburg, FL
727-570-5383

To locate the regional office nearest you, go to
http://www.seafood.nmfs.noaa.gov/Regional_Offices.html.

You can learn more about NOAA’s Seafood Inspection Program at
www.seafood.nmfs.noaa.gov.



Learn more about NOAA’s response to the BP oil spill at <http://response.restoration.noaa.gov/deepwaterhorizon>.

To learn more about NOAA, visit <http://www.noaa.gov>. 

